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THE ROOTS OF FREEDOM

by Edna Lonigan

Establishment of the new Economic Co-operation Administration has settled the issue of sending aid to Western Europe and China. But it is only beginning to raise the question of how the program will affect us here at home. There has been some discussion and precautionary arrangement respecting the economic effects of the so-called Marshall Plan. Very little has been said about the political effects of the huge new governmental administration now getting under way.

Command over billions of dollars worth of the products of our work is power. It is hard for many people to realize how much advantage the government has when it obtains even a small percentage of control over any service or product. We forget that the government's share is almost always much bigger than that of any other single participant.

We have had nothing like ECA except Harry Hopkins' lend-lease fund, and that gave him and his entourage decisive power over nearly all economic transactions in the United States and abroad. WPA, though smaller, had the same effect because, like all Government trading, it was a single concentrated force, working against many scattered units and able to destroy them piecemeal.

There is real danger that we are trying to maintain freedom abroad, by methods which will eventually destroy it at home. The "crisis" which produced ECA is not the last with which we shall be suddenly confronted.

II

Our philosophy of freedom was formulated by Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century thinkers, to meet a crisis which very nearly overwhelmed them. We must re-examine and reanimate that philosophy to meet a crisis that may otherwise overwhelm us.

Today free Society is not being attacked from above, by powerful kings, but from below by the people themselves. Men who are both ambitious and ruthless are organizing the discontented into legions to carry them to power.

The most carefully planned of these attacks on free Society is being led by the Soviet Union. But in every country, including our

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own, men who will not admit to being Communists follow the same path, because it is the path to power today. Therefore, we have to find the defenses for our day, just as the men of 1689 and 1787 found the representative Parliament and the restrictions of a written Constitution.

The first struggles for liberty were struggles over taxes, produced by the ease with which the king could seize the people's earnings and the recklessness with which he wasted them. If the king had his own money he could have his own army, and then he could arrest and punish anyone who opposed him. The king claimed power by "divine right", but he exercised power through the wealth which he seized from his subjects.

The English won their freedom when they succeeded in setting up a Parliament to protect their earnings from the king. If the king could not take their money his tyranny collapsed. Every right which the English gained turned on the ability of the Parliament to say No. But where did Parliament get its power, since it had no army, no bureaucracy, no money, no hereditary privileges? Why didn't the rulers destroy their most dangerous opponent?

Because the kings and their favorites could not confiscate the people's earnings, that money was scattered among thousands of individuals, no one of whom was strong enough to dominate the rest.

In that diffusion is found the roots of freedom -- the division of economic power among thousands of private separate ventures. It has long been recognized that in an agricultural Society freedom rests on a large number of independent yeomen farmers. We do not see so clearly that in an industrial Society it rests in like fashion on thousands of separate private ventures, whether factories, colleges, stores, railroads or hospitals. Each has a little bit of the nation's resources, and is free to use them as the management directs, each unit governing itself without control from the center.

At the end of the Seventeenth Century, John Locke could take the system of private ventures for granted because then it was flourishing. These private ventures were the roots of freedom because Parliament got its support from them. If English citizens had not first organized their free enterprises, in which thousands of men learned to govern themselves, Parliament, whose only strength is the strength of the citizens, could never have stood against the kings.

The creation of this multitude of free and separate ventures, or "economic families", altered the fate of the human race. It showed men how to produce wealth beyond their wildest dreams.

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III

The attack on freedom today is an attack on the right of the people to work through their own private organizations. The would-be kings know very well what they want to destroy, but many citizens do not know what they want to defend.

If the present attack succeeds, if private associations become mere appendages of a strong State apparatus, then Congress, the Constitution, representative government and the courts will go down together. Congress cannot protect the citizens against taxes or tyranny, if the citizens' organizations themselves are continuously asking the government for money. Thereby they give the government the power which the raising of money implies.

Modern intellectuals dislike the free enterprise system. The struggle of plain citizens to govern their own lives they describe with scorn as "capitalism". And the factory system has deprived wage workers of the experience in self-government which they had had in the frontier times. The workers lost understanding of the system which gave them work. Increasingly, politicians have catered to the new masses until the very meaning of liberalism has been destroyed.

In these same years the growth of population started to outstrip even the rapid growth of wealth. In some countries real, as opposed to nominal, wages showed a downward tendency. The cost of food rose with industrialization of other lands. Only drastic cuts in all the expenses of government, and the greatest enterprise in opening new ventures, would have saved these nations from decline. Instead, with totalitarian war to help them, intellectuals planned how to take over the people's diminishing surplus, and waste it. Heavy taxation, inflation, legal wage-fixing, regulation of production and costs, were the means by which governments weakened the power and wealth of the citizens' associations, and left them dependent on the State.

Some who call themselves "liberals" seem to believe they can drain away the surpluses of private associations, and hamstring their production with regulations, but that nothing disastrous will happen to the Parliament or Congress, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The Communists know better. Their secret weapon is knowledge of how to speed the process of disintegration, how to help us destroy ourselves.

IV

We in America have taken one after another of the same steps which European intellectuals devised to restore the tyrannical State. For a while it was enough to think that Roosevelt was responsible for the

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trend to Statism and that with his death we would return to the American way. We shall not escape so cheaply.

The test of a free Society is not periodic elections; not a Congress; not a Constitution. Nations have had all these and still have not been free. These assets are the benefits a Society gets after it has won its freedom. They may survive, for a time, when freedom has been destroyed.

A nation can be truly free only if all its resources are widely distributed, divided among a great many people, in many free enterprises, each of which governs itself and can experiment to improve its functioning. Enterprises are not free if they are subject to centralized control, whether it be that of a manufacturers' association, a labor union confederation, or a government agency.

The individual farm, of Jefferson's choice, and its industrial and commercial counterparts, the separate private ventures shaped by participating members, are the only school for self-government, the only sure defense for liberty. The individual can be free only if he has freedom of choice, only if he can change his job, his union, his house, his city, even his country as he wishes. He can not have freedom of choice unless there are many ventures among which he can choose.

Only a multitude of private asssociations makes it possible for the individual to preserve his personal freedom. If private ventures are gradually consolidated into one venture, controlled by a few powerful men, then no worker, no newspaper, no college, no preacher can effectively dissent. The drift to totalitarianism can be stopped by only one thing: a complete return to many private self-governing associations to handle all the multitudinous operations for which human co-operation is essential.

At home we need a new self-denying ordinance, a pledge by every man and woman who believes in freedom that he or she will accept no help from the State. All those who are spiritually sons and daughters of the American Revolution should be glad to take such a pledge.

Our task abroad is not to contain the Communists nor to "give" Europe "aid". It is to restore liberty by showing the people of other countries the vast unrealized possibilities for good -- if they will abandon the centralization of power, forget their fears about who may get ahead, their reliance upon the State, and will instead joyfully embrace the task of creating a new world, of private and voluntary activities where the individual can once again be free.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events VOL. V, NO. 22

By Frank C. Hanighen June 2, 1948

A new Taft boom has appeared, and a fresh consideration of Taft chances is in order. The Taft candidacy has had nine lives: Taft's stock has gone up and down, and at times he has been completely counted out of the race, always however returning to favor. In the past few weeks, he has made progress again, and there are observers who believe he may poll the highest vote on the first ballot at the Convention. If this be the trend, why has the Taft candidacy received comparatively little consideration in commentaries?

There is a growing feeling that a sort of tacit prejudice has operated against an honest appraisal of the Taft chances. This prejudice, some feel, has resulted in minimizing his ability, his support and much evidence of his progress towards the nomination.

Now, newsmen as a class do not want to be "caught out", no matter what their preferences. And so they have begun to look more closely at news reports favorable to the Taft candidacy. An example was the front page story by James A. Hagerty in the New York Times (May 31). Also it is recalled that insufficient importance was given to the Taft defeat of Stassen in the Ohio primary, in particular the Taft delegate's defeat of the Stassen man in the race for delegate-at-large -- a place early conceded to Stassen by Taft supporters. Last week, we noted here the Taft victory in the Maine primary. Why was this not reported widely? During the past week, Taft won the bulk of the Texas delegation -- 30 votes. Yet, while the story was reported in most papers, few commentaries drew any favorable conclusions for the Taft cause.

This week the boom for Vandenberg obscures the Taft revival. The Vandenberg phenomenon calls for scrutiny. It seems to arise, not from Party elders seeking a harmonious compromise between Dewey and Taft forces, but from extra-Party forces. The remark of one Washington observer is interesting: "All the elements which supported the now discredited Roosevelt foreign policy are trying to save their position and faces. They see the popular approval of that policy fast crumbling and disappearing. Taft, who has never modified his critical attitude towards that policy, is moving into the vacuum. A desperate effort is being made to push Vandenberg into this vacuum ahead of Taft." These elements are strong, and if the Convention were held next week they would probably succeed in nominating Vandenberg. But will it be the same after three weeks of the Vandenberg boom? And does not the Vandenberg boom look a little like a "Stop Taft" movement?

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Is the State Department really running Mr. Paul Hoffman's ECA? The list of top administrators in the Washington headquarters of ECA -- as this column has pointed out -- does not bear this out. But such a picture may prove deceptive. It is emphasized that these administrators are permanent officials; and, while good men, they are not numerous. The largest number of officials, and the most influential, are those "on loan" from the State Department to ECA as "temporary" assistants. The general assumption has been that as Hoffman appoints permanent officials, these State Department "temporaries" will be withdrawn from ECA.

Hard-bitten observers of the ways of the bureaucracy see it differently. The whole facade is false, they claim, and the State Department bureaucracy is only waiting until Congress goes home. Then, the crowd of "temporary" officials would

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be blanketed into the ECA as "permanent". It was noted that at last week's hearing of the Appropriations Committee, Mr. Averell Harriman (head of the European division of ECA) was attended by a State Department official, Mr. Dallas Dort, who has an interesting record as a New Deal bureaucrat.

At these hearings, the Senators obtained Mr. Hoffman's promise to tighten his program with respect to the problem of "offshore" dollars. The phrase refers to dollars which non-European (usually Latin-American) countries siphon off from American financial aid to Europe. A specific example is Argentina which makes European countries pay extortionate prices in dollars for its agricultural products; then freezes the dollars of U.S. firms, operating in Argentina. Both U.S. farmers and business men are fed up with this practice. Farmers do not like to see American funds going to buy Argentine wheat at $5 a bushel. And U.S. business firms want to get their money out of Argentina.

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If Mr. Hoffman had only to deal with reasonable Europeans, like M. Andre Siegfried for instance, instead of self-seeking politicians, his task would be less complicated. M. Siegfried, one of Europe's greatest publicists, analyzes "Europe's Crisis" in France-Amerique (May 2). He recalls that a certain political observer once applied the term "Omphalism" to the system of Nineteenth Century Europe. Omphale, queen of Lydia in Greek mythology, lived by the labors of Hercules; and one of the disarming pictures of mythology is that of Hercules spinning the distaff and doing the house chores of the Lydian monarch. Europe a century ago lived as a banker-industrialist-technician, with the rest of the world providing the raw materials and common labor -- not unlike the elementary toil of Hercules. Today that "Omphalism" is dead and Europe lies in ruins.

But, says M. Siegfried, "In spite of everything, she [Europe] keeps an important place in the economic direction of the world, notably through her colonies which it is essential for her not to lose. (I hope that, belatedly, Americans have understood this). She retains an incontestable individual superiority, with a creative genius even in technical matters, which America itself does not possess to the same degree. But, this said, she can count only on herself if she wishes to regain her previous standard of living. Also, this is not the time to speak of leisures and facilities, but, on the contrary, of effort and production, for we shall only consume what we shall have produced." And M. Siegfried concludes by emphasizing that the European Omphale will hereafter have to "do her own work". (Our emphasis.)

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The initial acceptance by Arabs and Israel of the "four weeks' truce" considerably eased the state of mind of responsible authorities in Washington. Although little was allowed to reach the press on this matter, these quarters entertained a lively fear that Soviet Russia somehow might intervene in the Holy Land situation; or, as some put it, "turn the Palestine war into another Spanish civil war". Irgun's appeal to Russia for help last week end certainly intensified this fear.

One of the points which worried official circles was the nature of Soviet Russia's recognition of Israel. The United States recognized Israel as the de facto government. Russia recognized Israel as a de jure government. It was felt (and still is felt by the pessimists) that this distinction may later have importance. For instance, if the Israel cause should collapse to the extent that Israel could hardly merit the title of a government, then de facto recognition would cease. But, no matter what happens, de jure recognition would not be altered by such changing circumstances. In the latter case, Russia would still recognize

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Israel as a legal government and indeed might give protection in Russia to an Israel government-in-exile. In any case, the nature of the recognition has given Soviet Russia plenty of leeway in shaping her policy towards Palestine.

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Secretary Marshall may be faced with a difficult personnel problem within the next thirty days. It is reliably reported that Norman Armour, Assistant Secretary for Political Affairs, may ask to be relieved of his duties. Armour, who has a fine record in the Foreign Service and the Department, for the past year has been State's "No. 3 man" -- ranking next in importance to Undersecretary Lovett. It is understood that Mr. Armour, after a long career, wants to retire for purely personal reasons. If Marshall fails to persuade Armour to stay on, then there arises the problem of a successor. State Department circles talk of two men as eligible from the point of view of rank and experience -- Edwin C. Wilson, now Ambassador to Turkey; and Jefferson Caffrey, now Ambassador to France. Since there has been much discussion of the possibility that Mr. Caffrey may retire, Ambassador Wilson seems the most likely candidate for Armour's job.

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Watching the UP ticker last Thursday, May 27, we found two stories from other parts of the world that interested us. Apparently, they interested telegraph editors much less; for in one case a vital part of the story disappeared in the newspaper version; in the other case, the story did not appear at all.

The first mentioned story was that of the defeat of Jan Christiaan Smuts, premier of the South African Government, and his party. The downfall of this world statesman -- "handyman of the British Empire" -- indeed constituted news. Nationalist sentiment had apparently been rising in this British dominion and ties with the rest of the Empire were relaxing. It was not surprising that a reaction against the internationalism of Smuts' party had set in. But it was surprising that Smuts himself should lose his seat; he had represented that constituency for 24 years. So, we watched the ticker for an explanation. It came: "It was believed he (Smuts) might have lost many votes among Englishmen and former British Army soldiers when he recognized the new State of Israel only two days before the election." The interpretation sounded reasonable. But in local and in New York newspapers that night and the next day, this part of the story unaccountably failed to appear. Was this an accident, or was it the result of the pro-Zionist slant now prevalent in the American press?

The other story probably got lost because of the chronic lack of interest in Latin-American affairs. In these days of Western Union and Benelux, the Grand Colombian Economic Conference deserved at least a few lines. "Grand Colombian" does not mean that the republic of Colombia has become imperialist and wants to annex the territory of other nations. La Gran Colombia was one of the first independent Latin-American republics, which later fragmented into several separate units. Today these units are moving to create a joint economic system.

The United Press reported a plan for a customs union of Colombia, Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela, which was introduced at the second session of the preparatory commission of the Grand Colombian Economic Conference, in Quito, Ecuador. The plan (which was proposed by Ecuador) envisages the economic union of the four republics with a potential market of 20,000,000 inhabitants. It would speed the industrialization of these countries and increase their reciprocal trade. Other plans under consideration include establishment of a Grand Colombian bank and a commercial air line. One might discount entirely these proposals as the product of merely hopeful conversations, if it were not for the following fact. Already Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela jointly own and operate a Grand Colombian merchant fleet, which the suggested joint air fleet is designed to supplement.

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Book Events

Ideas Have Consequences, by Richard M. Weaver. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, $2.75. Reviewed by J. M. Lalley.

Here we have an effort to diagnose the modern sickness in terms of ontology. Now ontology is the division of metaphysics which has to do with questions of ultimate being. The implication of Mr. Weaver's title is that it is our concepts of reality which determine for good or bad the character of the civilization and Society we inhabit. Accordingly, Mr. Weaver traces the root of the disorder as far back as the latter part of the Fourteenth Century, for it was then that the quarrel over the universals, which had been agitating the medieval schoolmen for three hundred years, was resolved in favor of the nominalists.

Nominalism is the doctrine that generic terms do not correspond to any realities either in objective nature or in the mind, and that such words, for example, as man, horse, bird, tree, are mere names without referents, since the material universe is comprised of an infinity of unique objects. Each object has therefore its own peculiar essence, independent of general forms. Nominalism is thus the triumph of the particular over the general and of the concrete over the abstract, and speculative inquiry is diverted from the quest of ideal categories of thought to the investigation of concrete things, and empirical demonstration supplants abstract reason as the test of validity. The mind is preoccupied with facts rather than meanings, or, to borrow the language of Whitehead, it is no longer a question of why things happen in the universe, but of how they happen. Accordingly, one of the great fruits of philosophic nominalism was the amazing epoch of discovery upon which Western mankind was launched after the breakup of the medieval synthesis and thus we owe to it all the great technological innovations of the last three hundred years.

But out of the nominalist revolution, Mr. Weaver tells us, have also come evils which prove its purported blessings to have been quite illusory. Chief among these evils are the anarchy of modern thought, the chaos of modern education, the idiosyncracy of modern art, the excesses of modern politics, the disappearance of moral norms, the bankruptcy of language and the prevalence of insanity and neurosis. The argument, whereby Mr. Weaver supports his catalog of the crimes of nominalism, is somewhat clouded by his hortatory manner of writing and by a certain polemical hauteur. The main point seems to be that where the transcendent reality of general ideas is not posited there can be no hierarchies of value. In a universe where everything is unique one thing is as good and as important as another. The consequence is a purely quantitative civilization which ends in an apotheosis of material force. The tendency is to an obliteration of qualitative distinctions and it has been destructive of all harmony in life and of all order and authority in Society. In one aspect the glorification of the particular has replaced harmonious diversity with monotonous uniformity, as for example in the rise of political and social egalitarianism and the creation of a mass psychology which responds automatically to standardized stimuli. At the same time it has been disruptive of all unities. The disintegrating influence is manifest for example in the specialization of learning and the progressive division and subdivision of economic functions. Since we have lost faith in the reality of humanity, it is no longer possible for us to be complete men; we have somehow lost our integrity, or wholeness, which doubtless accounts for the overweening loneliness and frustration that we feel amid our plethora of material satisfaction. Perhaps it also explains why schizophrenia, or the dissolution of personality, has become the dominant psychopathological malady of the time. And in natural science the destruction of entities is carried to the point where the very stuff of concretion vanishes in a general explosion, and the nominalist universe ends in a kind of ontological suicide.

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